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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern

Zambia:* draft resolution

Women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/ acquired immunodeficiency syndrome

The Commission on the Status of Women,

Recognizing that women play a vital role in the social and economic development of their countries and, therefore, profoundly concerned by the fact that out of 33.6 million people living with human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) today, women now represent 46 per cent of all people over the age of 15 living with HIV and AIDS,

Noting with great concern that the proportion of women becoming infected with HIV is growing in every region, that in sub-Saharan Africa 55 per cent of those living with HIV are women and that, in the younger age brackets (15-24 years), girls are at higher risk of HIV infection and that more girls than boys are now infected,

Recognizing that gender inequalities begin early in life and can render women and the girl child unable to protect their sexual and reproductive health, thus increasing their risk and vulnerability to HIV infection,

Mindful that the majority of women and the girl child in most developing countries do not enjoy full social and economic rights, such as education, health care and welfare, and therefore suffer disproportionately from the consequences of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly in the economic and social spheres,

* On behalf of the Group of African States and in accordance with rule 69 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

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Recognizing that women, who constitute the majority of the poor, are especially vulnerable to HIV infection because of their subordinate status in society, in the household and in communities and because of their restricted access to education, gainful employment and health and information services,

Also recognizing that women, in particular young girls, are physiologically and biologically more vulnerable than men to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, and yet receive minimal health care and support when infected,

Noting with concern that approximately 80 per cent of the infected women have been infected through unprotected sex with an infected male partner, and acknowledging therefore that men have a shared responsibility towards protecting their own and women's sexual health,

Acknowledging that millions of women do not have access to means that have proved effective in preventing and lowering infection rates, such as male and female condoms, anti-retroviral drugs, relevant preventive education, acceptable counselling and testing services,

Noting with appreciation the efforts of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and its co-sponsoring organizations, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Bank, to empower women through capacity development programmes, as well as programmes that provide women with access to development resources and strengthen their networks which offer care and support to women affected by HIV/AIDS,

1. *Reaffirms* the rights of women and the girl child infected and affected by HIV/AIDS to have access to health, education and social services and to be protected from all forms of discrimination, stigma, abuse and neglect;

2. *Also reaffirms* the human rights of girls and women to equal access to education, skills training and employment opportunities as a means to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection;

3. *Urges* Governments to take all necessary measures to strengthen women's economic independence and to protect and promote their human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to allow them to better protect themselves from HIV infection;

4. *Emphasizes* that the advancement and empowerment of women is critical to increasing the ability of women and young girls to protect themselves from HIV infection;

5. *Stresses* that every effort should be made by Governments, relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, individually and collectively, to place combating HIV/AIDS as a priority on the development agenda and to implement effective prevention strategies and programmes, especially for the most vulnerable populations, including women and young girls;

6. *Calls upon* the international community, relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to intensify their support of national efforts against HIV/AIDS,

particularly in favour of women and young girls, in the worst-hit regions of Africa and where the epidemic is severely setting back national development gains;

7. *Urges* Governments to take steps to create an environment that promotes compassion and support for those infected with HIV, to provide the legal framework that will protect the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, to enable those who are vulnerable to have access to appropriate voluntary counselling services and to encourage efforts to reduce discrimination and stigmatization;

8. *Also urges* Governments, with the assistance of relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to create an environment and conditions that will take care of and support children orphaned by AIDS;

9. *Encourages* Governments to recognize the challenges facing girls and women, particularly older women, who are primary caregivers for people living with HIV/AIDS, and to provide them with the necessary economic and psychosocial support;

10. *Further urges* Governments, with the assistance of relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, to adopt a long-term, timely, coherent and integrated AIDS prevention policy, with public information and life-skills-based education programmes specifically tailored to the needs of women and girls within their sociocultural contexts and sensitivities and the specific needs in their life cycle;

11. *Encourages* Governments and civil society to support women's groups and community organizations in changing harmful traditions and practices affecting the health of women and girls and to take steps to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including rape and sexual coercion, which aggravate the conditions fostering the spread of the epidemic;

12. *Encourages* accelerated research on vaccine development and intensified additional research on promotion of the female condom, microbicides and other options that offer women more control over the protection of their reproductive and sexual health;

13. *Requests* Governments to ensure that condoms and care for sexually transmitted diseases are available in places accessible and affordable to women while ensuring their privacy;

14. *Also requests* Governments to provide comprehensive health care for women with HIV, including treatment for opportunistic diseases and reproductive health services;

15. *Welcomes* the efforts of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in promoting sexual and reproductive health education for young people, in particular girls, while encouraging them to delay sexual initiation, and, in this context, urges that greater attention be given to the education of men and boys about their roles and their responsibilities in preventing the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, to their partners;

16. *Urges* the Joint United Nations Programme and its co-sponsors to intensify their efforts in assisting Governments to determine the best policies and

programmes to prevent women and young girls from becoming infected with HIV/AIDS;

17. *Requests* the Joint Programme and its co-sponsors, bilateral and multilateral donors and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in their efforts to prevent HIV infection, to give urgent and priority attention to the situation of women and girls in Africa;

18. *Invites* the relevant entities of the United Nations system, including agencies, funds and programmes, to mainstream gender policies and programmes integrating HIV/AIDS activities;

19. *Takes note with appreciation* of section III.C of the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,[1] on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS, and invites the Secretary-General to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fifth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

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[1] E/CN.6/2000/2.